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Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy

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Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888-1973) was a sociologist and social philosopher who, along with his close friend Franz Rosenzweig, and Ferdinand Ebner and Martin Buber was a major exponent of speech thinking or dialogicism. The central insight of speech thinking is that speech or language is not merely, or even primarily, a descriptive act, but a responsive and creative act which is the basis of our social existence.¹ The greater part of Rosenstock-Huessy's work was devoted to demonstrating how speech/ language, through its unpredictable fecundity, expands our powers and, through its inescapably historical forming character also binds them. According to Rosenstock-Huessy, speech makes us collective masters of time and gives us the ability to overcome historical death by founding new more expansive and fulfilling spaces of social-life.

Rosenstock-Huessy also belonged to that post-Nietzschean revival of religious thought which included Franz Rosenzweig, Karl Barth, Leo Weismantel, Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg, Viktor von Weizsäcker, Martin Buber, Leo Schestow, Hugo Bergmann, Florens Christian Range, Nikolaj Berdjew, Margaret Susman, Werner Picht (all of whom were involved in the Patmos publishing house and its offshoot *Die Kreatur*) and Paul Tillich. Common to this group was the belief that religious speech, which they saw as distinctly not metaphysical, disclosed layers of experience and creativity (personal and socio-historical) which remain inaccessible to the metaphysics of naturalism.

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1. Overview

As with Franz Rosenzweig who goes to great length in *The Star of Redemption* and *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy* to demonstrate that God, man and world underpin three fundamentally different and irreducible foundations of explanation which have shaped our history, Rosenstock-Huessy was convinced

¹ *Sprache* in German refers to both speech and language. In general Rosenstock-Huessy when writing in English talked of speech when describing his central preoccupation – but not always and he also referred to what he was doing as grammatical thinking.

that humanism's attempt to free itself from all gods (making itself and/ or nature the ground of reality) was based upon a failure to grasp more ancient insights into the nature of the real and the relationship between reality, language and history. To this important extent, and, again like Rosenzweig, he argued that language was more fundamental than either philosophy or religion and philosophy's attempt to free itself from and reduce religion to a deficient kind of philosophy was based upon its failure to take language and hence reality sufficiently seriously. As he would say in 'First Cycle of Letters to Cynthia (Harris)': 'Not religion but language forces man to distinguish between this world and the real world, the world as we know it and the genuine, or better known world. The crux of theology is a crux of language, and all our rationalists are not protesting against religion but against speech' (1943, 162).

But unlike Karl Barth or Paul Tillich, for example, who saw themselves as fusing philosophy and theology, Rosenstock-Huessy refused to see himself primarily as a philosopher or theologian - though when the term philosopher was qualified by the preceding 'social,' he was more willing to accept that designation.² His criticisms of theology and philosophy were numerous, varied in content and highly nuanced – and hence unable to receive full treatment here. Generally, though, he thought both were, what he called, 'second order activities,' or products of the reflective mind at 'play.' That is, philosophical and theological speech trailed behind and were dependent upon the more urgent and creative acts of 'founding,' i.e. those acts which emerge out of life's exigencies, which are epoch making 'events' and which are at the source of human institutions and new forms of life, and which cannot be separated from the vocabulary, or, more specifically, the shared names and foci of orientation which connect us across space and over time.³ In the most philosophical of all his works, the first volume of his *Soziologie*, when contrasting the respective limits of theology with philosophy, he says that theology is guilty of reducing us to sinners and angels and thus not adequately accounting for our being flesh and blood, while philosophers tend to reduce us to objects and things in the dead space of the universe and 'to mirror the objective world in their subjective world.' (1956, 286) 'Religion,' he says in that same section, 'is unjust against nature and the human spirit (*Geist*)'; while philosophy is blind to 'the time-endowing forces' ('*die zeitstiftenden Gewalten*').⁴

² He was to engage critically with Barth throughout his life but see especially the letter to Barth (1920b, 9-16) and his autobiographical reflections (1968, 81-84). For Brunner (1942).

³ *Die Soziologie Vol. 1: Die Übermacht der Räume* provides a lengthy analysis of the distinction between seriousness and play; it concedes that what is created as play may enter again in the stream of life in seriousness, which of course happened with the death of Socrates.

⁴ Generally, though, Rosenstock-Huessy insists upon distinguishing between theology and religion, the former being a Medieval creation to deal with a Medieval problem, which involved recasting religious speech into a form more in tune with the philosophical or, what he just as frequently called, the Greek mind. See 1970a 37-43, and 1991a, 22-82.

Against philosophers and theologians, he saw his task as restoring our attunement to the potencies embedded in our speech and institutions so that we could draw upon the power of past times in order to strengthen our openness to the promise of the future in the present. To this end, while his corpus cuts across numerous disciplines, his major systematic work, one rewritten throughout the course of his life, was his two volume *Soziologie* (still un-translated, and for some years it has been in process of being re-released in Germany as an annotated edition). The subtitle to the two volumes gives an important clue to the basis of Rosenstock's social philosophy: Volume One being *The Excessive Power (Übermacht) of Spaces*, Volume Two being *The Full (or Complete) Count or (Number) of the Times*. His social philosophy is concerned with how, when a world implodes on or devours them, through what he terms the four social diseases of anarchy, decadence, revolution and war (1970a, 11-16), people can escape the tyranny of forces that have come to rule the space in which they dwell by founding a new time which will then open up other spatial possibilities. For him, then, the key to human freedom is the capacity both to found the new and draw upon the powers encapsulated in bodies of time past which enable us to live in a present in which we feel blessed by the future. Rosenstock-Huessy repeatedly argues that philosophy generally is particularly weak in assisting us with this task and it is ultimately to Sociology that Rosenstock-Huessy turned as 'the way to win again our freedom over spaces and through times' (1956, 23). Hence against the Cartesian cogito, which he saw as providing the underpinning formulation of the philosophy of modernity, Rosenstock-Huessy retorts with the much more archaic-*Respondeo esti mutabor* – 'I respond although I will be changed' (1938, 817-830; 1970b, 17-33). In other words, we are fundamentally responsive creatures – and our creations are shaped by our responses either to the weight and push of the past, the burdens or joys of the present or the pull and call of the future. Like Vico, whom Rosenstock-Huessy greatly admired, he believes we are inescapably rooted in history, even though our great revolutions attempt to rip us out of it, in order to begin anew and build a much better world, thereby opening up new paths of self-hood and the world.⁵

Philosophy's major deficiency, for Rosenstock-Huessy, is that it is not sufficiently sensitive to time, speech or history. To a large extent this is because of logic itself as being timeless. As he says in 'The Terms of the Creed,' 'logic is that mode of spiritual life in which the divinity of timing is omitted.' Logic transports us out of time and offers the mind a stable, but unreal space. For Rosenstock-Huessy, this search for a stable space is reflected in recurrent philosophical elements which privilege the implacability of space (or a particular space) over the ceaselessness of time. Modern philosophy's division of things into subject and object (a spatial configuration) is a case in point, but it goes back to the ancients whose building blocks such as topics (from *topos* place), 'categories' (from *kata* 'down to' and *agora* 'the public assembly' i.e. declaiming in the assembly), reason's sphericity, and ideas-(the very term *idea*, *eidein* = to see, referring to something

⁵ Stahmer and Gormann-Thelen (1998) correctly identify Vico, Hamann, Goethe, Saint-Simon and Paracelsus as being important spirits of inspiration for his work.

visible to the mind's eye) all suggest a commitment to (the mental) space's primacy. The same point is made somewhat more elaborately in the first volume of the *Sociology* (280-284) where he argues that dialectical thought is triadic, but anything that really happens and makes itself manifest, i.e. appears (*erscheint*) is at least quadrilateral.⁶ It must be something in space and time, and hence conform to the inner/ outer-ness or subjective/objective matrix of space, as well as the trajective and prejective-ness of time. He called this four-fold matrix the cross of reality and it is applied repeatedly throughout his works.

While, then, Rosenstock-Huessy provided a range of arguments against philosophers wanting to make more of reason and less of language, time and history than their due, and while he preferred to classify himself as a sociologist, he can also be seen as a social philosopher who argued for the philosophical necessity of the fusion of history, linguistics, anthropology, sociology and religion. Franz Rosenzweig certainly saw Rosenstock-Huessy in this light, and he once said to him: 'You have never... been to me anything other than a "philosopher" (1969, 82).⁷ In this respect he belongs to that long line of critics of philosophy that range from ancients to moderns and comic poets to religious thinkers – from Aristophanes to Lucian to Rabelais to Tatian, to Tertullian to Luther to Pascal to Marx and Nietzsche. All these critics have provided criticisms of philosophy that have ended up, in different ways, and at different times, transforming the direction and content of philosophy.

2. Life and Work.

Eugen Rosenstock was born in 1888. His parents were assimilated (i.e. non religious) German Jews. His mother and father, a banker, encouraged academic pursuits in their children. At school his classes were in Latin, and from a young age Rosenstock devoted himself to history and linguistics. His passion for learning languages extended to teaching himself Egyptian hieroglyphics while a teenager. He is probably one of the very few social philosophers who (apart from his fluency in several modern European languages) not only read the biblical writers, ancient philosophers, poets, orators and Church fathers in their original languages, but was equally at home deciphering the walls of an Egyptian temple. This schooling formed the basis of an approach to reality which always considered the different underlying imperatives – divine and human – that fused a group or lead to its dissolution. It also provided him with what he insisted was a guiding methodological principle in his life: to make no historical argument that was not based upon his own consultation of the original source material.

⁶ The Kantianism of this particular formulation is deliberate. H=He argues, in this section, that Kant's great service was in laying out the limits of dialectic and logic and he credits Kant with laying out the method for sociological thinking.

⁷ He also said that Rosenstock-Huessy was the most important influence upon the development of his own 'New Thinking.' For his part, Rosenstock-Huessy not only saw himself as involved in a life-time's dialogical project with Franz Rosenzweig, but he held that the true breakthrough in their contribution to speech thinking would only be grasped by readers who read them together – in all their differences.

He joined the Protestant church at 17. By his own account, this was not due to any great existential anxiety, but to having reached the conclusion at a very young age that what was stated in the Nicene Creed was manifestly obvious. (1970 b, 197). Rosenstock-Huessy insisted that Christianity was not a religion of transcendence and was not to be confused with Platonism of any sort, but was about building the ages or times to come in this world. It was first and foremost a discovery about the process of incarnation and the way to overcome social death. Nor for him was the Church, as it was, for example, for Karl Barth or Emil Brunner, for the great part a massive deviation from the gospel. Rather, not only in spite of, but to a significant extent because of its flaws, it was the story of the incarnation of the spirit and the recreation of human nature into a different body, the body of Christ. In other words, the task of the Church was that of making man like God, what the Church fathers in the Athanasian creed had called ‘anthropurgy’ (1946, 108). Such a core Christian terms as last judgment or redemption, then, had nothing to do with the individual surviving after death in a place called heaven or hell (an idea he thought owed more to Plato than Jesus or Paul). Resurrection meant the resuscitation of seemingly historically spent forms of life so that their powers could be tapped for generations to come, while the last judgment was the deployment of all our force to prevent its continuing into the future. Thus in his ‘Faculty Address on The Potential Christians of the Future Address:’

And I know of the Last Judgment as a reality because I have seen Last Judgments passed on Proust’s France, on Rasputin’s Russia, on Wilhelm II’s Germany, President Harding’s America. Similarly I believe in resurrection of the body because I see resurrections of bodies, all through history, on earth. Any genuine soul will be incarnated time and again. (1941, 11-12)

Examples of incarnations he mentions, beside Christ himself in the Church, are St. Francis in the Franciscan order and all its achievements, Leonardo Da vinci by succeeding generations of engineers, Sigmund Freud in the psychiatric movement, Marx in the workers’ movement and so on. (1956, 303-309.)

Rosenstock-Huessy studied jurisprudence and received his doctorate (*Herzogsgewalt und Friedensschutz*) from the University of Heidelberg at the age of 21, from which time he went on to teach at the university. He was also to receive a second doctorate in 1923 in Philosophy from the same university, for his *Königshaus und Stämme in Deutschland zwischen 911 und 1250*, a book he had published in 1914. His teachers included Rudolf Sohm and Otto Gierke, both key figures in the historical school of law. While he was not a disciple of either, throughout his life he would never cease writing on the growth and decay of socio-political formations and what forced people to hate one form of life and seek to found another.

Amongst his students was Franz Rosenzweig. In 1913, Rosenstock-Huessy played a pivotal role in convincing Rosenzweig that the 'living God' was not the God of metaphysics who, thankfully, had been pronounced dead by Nietzsche, but referred to a power more 'meaningful' and 'truthful' than could be accounted for by the limited powers of philosophy. By this he was not referring to any mystical powers, but the full gamut of creative, and redemptive powers which are created and revealed throughout the human story. In this respect he played an important role in convincing Rosenzweig that truth was not so much a property of things or states of affairs captured by the reflecting mind, but a state of fecundity produced by the act appropriate for the time in which it was performed. If Rosenstock-Huessy can be said to have an epistemology which can be reproduced in one sentence, it is Goethe's 'What is fruitful, that alone is true,' which is but a recasting of the biblical 'by their fruits you shall know them.' (1968, 11)

In 1914, he met and married Margrit Huessy whom he loved dearly, raised a son with and remained married to until she died in 1958. After her death he was joined by Freya von Moltke, who was to be his companion until his death. Freya von Moltke was the widow of his former student, Helmuth von Moltke, a key member of the Kreisau circle who was murdered near the conclusion of the World War 2 by Hitler.

During the Great War Rosenstock-Huessy served as a captain in the German army where he fought on the Western front. In 1916 he began an intense correspondence with Rosenzweig, now published in English as *Judaism Despite Christianity*, who by that time had decided not to follow Rosenstock and his cousins, the Ehrenbergs, into Christianity, but to fully embrace the Jewish faith into which he had been born. That correspondence has remained a major post-Nietzschean Christian/Jewish dialogue. While in that correspondence Rosenstock-Huessy was uncompromising in his insistence that Judaism was a spent historical force, he continued to reflect upon Rosenzweig's decision to remain a Jew throughout his life. He came to the opinion that Rosenzweig had convincingly demonstrated the eternal role of Judaism in the human story.

A year after this exchange began Rosenzweig met and fell in love with Rosenstock-Huessy's wife, Margrit or Gritli. Rosenstock accepted, not without suffering (Stahmer, 2006), the love that had developed between his best friend and wife, and years later he would confide to his friend and devotee Georg Müller that Margrit had been Rosenzweig's muse throughout the writing of *The Star of Redemption*, and, more precisely, that Rosenzweig's understanding of revelation which plays such a decisive role in that same work came directly out of his experience of his love for Gritli. This has been born out in the relatively recent publication of Rosenzweig's letters to Gritli (*Briefe an Gritli*) which has been the

biggest event in Rosenzweig scholarship since Edith Rosenzweig's edition of his *Briefe* in 1935.⁸

Rosenstock-Huessy had entered the Great War a Christian Nationalist. By the War's end he was convinced that Germany's salvation required dropping all nationalist allegiances – its failure to do so, he predicted, would only throw it back again into further war. He also emerged from the War with an idea (first outlined in book-form in *Die Hochzeit des Kriegs und der Revolution*) that he would develop in *Out of Revolution* and *Die europäischen Revolutionen und der Charakter der Nationen* – that the Great War was the culmination of a millennium of revolutions and that it was these very catastrophes which provided the genesis of new and more powerful institutional bulwarks for what would become the fulfillment of the kingdom promised to the Jews and later to the human race through Christianity.

A core element of Rosenstock's social philosophy which emerged directly from his experience of the War and his subsequent 'vision' of the meaning of a thousand years of European wars and revolutions and political legacies was that suffering was a fundamental component of human learning. For the most part, and particularly socially, truth was something imprinted on us by pain and trauma rather than something merely learnt by candlelight. As he said bluntly in one public lecture: 'suffering is the only source of wisdom, and not my brain here.' (Cruciform Character of History - 1967 Vol 31 - Lecture 2 - March, 1967, Lecture (number-page) 2-014, Item number: 656, Reel number: 18). He develops this idea in 'The Secret of the University' in a manner which suggests we should be much more attentive to the catastrophic conditions under which any new philosophy emerges if we wish to see it in its proper light – philosophy being but one response to a social catastrophe which requires a great redirection of energies for society's survival or complete overthrow and the establishment of a new type.

No philosopher ever sat down as if in a classroom to answer the questions of his predecessor. To consider the history of philosophy in this way is insanity. Descartes grew out of the Thirty Years War. He has remained its eternal Privat-dozent. Kant became a philosopher after the Seven Years War, Schopenhauer came to meditation on the battlefields of Napoleon. The Franco-Prussian War forced Friedrich Nietzsche out of mere philology. (Microfilm Reel 8, 8: 427, 4-5.)

After the War Rosenstock-Huessy worked in Daimler Benz as an editor of a worker's magazine before he returned to the academic life. The desire to bridge the divide between education and the world remained a constant thread of Rosenstock's life, including his being a founding member of institutions such as the Academy of Labor in Frankfurt (1921) and the *German Academy for Volk Research and Adult Education* (1926) and being Vice Chairman of the World

⁸ Available in full on the internet thanks to Michael Gormann-Thelen <http://www.katalog.de/edition.htm>

Association of Adult Education (1928-1932). He was also a pioneer of the German work service movement in Germany, which was designed to engage students with the rest of the community (a movement which was later to be politicized and corrupted by the Nazis), and, after emigrating to the United States, the establishment of Camp William James in Vermont, the last of which was undertaken as part of Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps. While having changed the lives of many of his students, it was, however, abandoned as a failure. The importance of the fusion of education with work, for Rosenstock-Huessy, was based on his fundamental belief that humanity would only free itself from the perils of its past by creative collective acts, including reinvigorating the institutions which had themselves emerged as responses to and ways out of catastrophes, as well as establishment of new institutions appropriate for the times.

With Hitler's coming to power in 1933, Rosenstock and his wife and son Hans left Germany. The émigré political scientist Carl Friedrich helped him get work at Harvard, but it was not a satisfying experience for him or many of his colleagues. He was forced to leave Harvard because he insisted that 'God' was a living presence in history. Seen in the light of 'speech thinking,' a core axiom of which is that a name which generates reality (as God does through invocation, supplication, devotion and the like) is real (much realer, he insisted, than abstractions such as mind or body), it was the collision of two paradigms and their respective vocabularies: Rosenstock-Huessy's 'speech or dialogical-thinking' with its anti-naturalism (ironically, in that environment, a voice of one) versus the naturalistically based behaviorism that then predominated. A good example of the different worlds that then predominated can be gauged from a comparison of Crane Brinton's scathing comments on *Out of Revolution* (1939) and his withering retort in his review of Brinton's *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1939).

He ended up teaching social philosophy in Dartmouth where he remained for the rest of his academic career. While the stars of former friends and associates such as Buber and Tillich waxed in the United States, he was largely unknown and un-listened to, except, in the main, for some devoted undergraduates who taped his undergraduate lectures for posterity. He had not been completely forgotten in Germany, where his post-war lectures were well attended and his books reviewed in newspapers. While his name still crops up from time to time in European history or sociological works (his *Die europäischen Revolutionen* is something of a German minor classic in European Studies), Rosenstock-Huessy's ideas have not received a large audience. In part, at least, this has to do with his failure to conform to conventional academic categories of classification and scholarly protocols and disciplinary requirements, in particular the theological/ secular divide. In addition, there was almost no prevailing mood which Rosenstock-Huessy's thought seemed to tap into: neither the aesthetic/ literary mood of modernism (in general Rosenstock-Huessy thought art was play – and the period which spanned two world wars was not a time in which play would help stave off the next catastrophe); nor the subsequent radical student mood which Marxian

based social theories attended to (Rosenstock-Huessy, thought neo-Marxists of all kinds to be a hundred years out of date); nor the psychoanalytic movement that derived from Freud or Jung (he deeply mistrusted psychiatry, believing it placed too much weight upon the ego and did not adequately grasp the collective socio-historical formations which shape it); nor phenomenology, whose dependence upon lived experience was closer in spirit to his own thought, but, nevertheless, its purview remained insufficiently dialogical and insufficiently institutional for him to see much value in it. He was also unforgiving of Heidegger (as he was of Carl Schmitt whom, before Hitler's rise to power, he had once been on cordial terms with) and in the *Sociology*, he recounts, with contempt, a story in which Elfride Heidegger talks of her husband and her having to weigh up whether they would back the Marxists or the Nazis (1958, 52-53). The proliferation of work in linguistics which might have seemed to have provided him with natural allies did not help his case because he was deeply opposed to what he thought was the prevailing atomistic and unduly scientific approach to the study of language. Mauthner and Sausurre, for example, he thought were so wrong they barely warranted engaging with. And someone like C.S. Pierce whose pragmatism has certain affinities with Rosenstock-Huessy's understanding of truth also differs from Rosenstock-Huessy in its preoccupation with 'reasonable' and 'objective statements' as the road to truth. He saw himself much more in the more organicist tradition of Humboldt and was glad to find in R.A. Wilson's *The Miraculous Birth of Language* a contemporary linguist who had reached some similar conclusions to him about language's role and character in our social evolution.

This lack of academic 'fit' was a fact not lost on him and in the final paragraph of his *Out of Revolution* he wrote, with an eye as much to his Harvard experience as to his awareness of how he was being read:

...I have survived decades of study and teaching in scholastic and academic sciences. Every one of their venerable scholars mistook me for their intellectual type which he most despised. The atheist wanted me to disappear into Divinity, the theologians into sociology, the sociologists into history, the historians into journalism, the journalists into metaphysics, the philosophers into law, and – need I say it? – the lawyers into hell, which as a member of our present world I have never left. For nobody leaves hell all by himself without going mad. (1938, 758)

By the time Rosenstock-Huessy died in 1973 he had left behind a huge corpus ranging from his two volume *Soziologie*, the second volume of which is an attempt at universal history, to the aforementioned works on revolution, to a collection of essays and small books gathered in a two volume work on language, *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts*, to a three volume work on church history (with Joseph Wittig), *Das Alter der Kirche*,⁹ to various writings on grammar,

⁹ Wittig was a Catholic priest, who had been excommunicated from the Church. The book was, in part, a defense of Wittig's orthodoxy.

biblical interpretation, Egyptology, Medieval history, industrial law, organization of the work place and much else.

A few years before he died, a former student, Clinton Gardner, had formed Argo press, to keep his work alive. Another student, Harold Stahmer, had written introductions in English to some of his works, and a *Gesellschaft* had been started in Germany (both still exist) which still produces a journal/ newsletter, *Stimmstein* devoted to his work, influence and issues that might be of interest to his readers. In 1972 four families in Holland set up a Rosenstock-Huessy house in Haarlem to put Rosenstock-Huessy's ideas about adult education and voluntary service into practice by providing accommodation for people in a crisis. Thanks to the labours of Lise van der Molen and the efforts and donations of the Rosenstock-Huessy foundation a dvd edition of his collected works has been created. After his death W.H. Auden, who first met Rosenstock-Huessy, in 1938 and who wrote a Preface to a collection of his writings published by Argo in 1970 under the salient title *I am an Impure Thinker* wrote the valedictory poem, 'Aubade,' which was published in *The New Atlantic*.

3. Speech, Time, History

In *Ja und Nein*, a work written a little over four years before his death, Rosenstock-Huessy thanked Georg Müller for having summed up seven decades of thought in the three words: speech, time, history. 'I seem' he says 'to have pursued the daily life of peoples and their members as reflections of this trinity. I have looked at the speech of individuals and nations, the times of lovers and haters, the history of empires, the church and society as the reflections of the divine trinity.' (1968, 9). These three terms not only sum up the orientation of Rosenstock-Huessy's life work they also provide the key to understanding where he thinks philosophy has gone wrong.

For Rosenstock-Huessy speech's significance was not to describe a litany of factual statements about the world of the sort 'it is raining' – see 'Es Regnet' oder die Sprache steht auf dem Kopf" in *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts*). Nor is it, as Saussure held, simply a means of A expressing his or her intention to B. Moreover, Rosenstock-Huessy's interest in speech is restricted to what he calls in *The Origins of Speech*, authentic speech – it is not the kind speech which has its parallels in the animal kingdom – such as the calls of care and tenderness from mother to child and from mother bear to baby bear – but the foundation and perpetuation of constitutions, institutions – social acts that reach across generations and establish patterns of social complexity which show us the difference in our self- and world-making and that of animals.

We exist in a social reality which has been made by others and which we make for others. And thus speech gives us a plasticity which separates us from other animals and which enables us to work with time and space like no other species familiar to us. Speech is the way that we reorganize the universe, (1970a, 19)

No language is communication with others only, it is communication with the universe. We try by speaking to communicate our experience of the universe to our fellow men; by listening, reading, learning, we try to get hold of their experience of the universe. To speak means to reenact cosmic processes so that these processes may reach others. In every sentence, man acts within the cosmos and establishes a social relation for the sake of saving the cosmos from wasting acts in vain. Man economizes the cosmic processes by making them available to all other men. Man, by speech, establishes the solidarity of all men for the acceptance of our universe. (1970a, 122-123)

That solidarity is ultimately historical, for it is only by being able to draw upon the powers of the past and future that the human being can survive the crises of their present. Thus speech and history form an indissoluble connection. As he says in his 'First Cycle of Letters to Cynthia,' 'Language is the vehicle on which history invades the animal life of man. And the study of history and the study of language are one and the same study.' (1943, 173)

Speech, then, is a responsive and creative act in which we discover things about ourselves, each other and the world itself we would never have chanced upon had we not the power to reframe the universe through speech – speech accounts for our unpredictable nature. And a large part of Rosenstock-Huessy's objection to naturalism is that either it ignores speech completely and reduces us to more basic animal or physical processes, or, if it does take account of speech it places speech on the same continuum as animal cries and calls.

The social character of speech also means that it is not only a matter of what is being said when we speak to one another, but also who is talking to whom – what a father says to a child, a president to his or her people, friends to one another etc.. As he writes in *Ja und Nein*,

In speech it is not a matter of what I think about myself, or even just what I say, rather it's a matter of how we address each other reciprocally. We don't speak, as the semanticists declare, to understand something. We speak, so that each understands the other through the manner that we address him and we ourselves through the way he address us. Each man proceeds thus: A false address can irritate someone for the entire day. Because speech comes into the world in order to ensure that your representation of me and mine of you is situated in the right places in the cosmos. (1968, 23.)

This one example shows how Rosenstock-Huessy differs from Saussurian linguistics which break up the world into the units of language irrespective of how language circulates socially. It also shows how far removed Rosenstock-Huessy is from the naturalistic based philosophical models which see the world as an object to be understood. For Rosenstock-Huessy, the truth of the world we participate in - which includes the panoply of names and concepts and theories which we ascribe to nature - could never have been 'noticed' by a disinterested scientific spectator some three thousand years ago because it wasn't there yet. It takes time for us and our truths to become created and revealed to us and speech is the power of disclosing us to each other and ourselves, in part through our respective roles which enable us to preside over a particular domain of 'powers.' Speech takes and makes time. In an important sense, for Rosenstock-Huessy, speech is revelation which is, in turn, orientation which is also a process of mutual development:

The double character of revelation consists in the way in which it allocates to the speaker as much as to the people whom the speaker sees before him, a new and at the same time a determined place.. revelation is orientation. Orientation is a correlation between at least two new poles; one may call it a 'correspondence', because this relationship between two letter writers is today more likely to be understood than between two speakers. In a correspondence two speakers respond in such a manner that the more the longer it continues the more each correspondent becomes polarized in his own character. (1968, 21)

In speech then we really make each other and hence we are literally for Rosenstock-Huessy the word made flesh. The corollary of this which is that 'we ourselves become structured by grammar.' He puts it more forcefully when he writes 'most men are shards of broken grammar,' (1968, 37 and 43) and he went so far as to hold that grammar is the key to us as social organisms. In keeping with this he proposed a re-working of the social sciences on the basis of a grammatical revolution. Indeed, he believes that as things are now the social sciences rest on a grammar that is akin to Ptolemaic astronomy. (See 'Die kopernikanische Wendung der Grammatik' in *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts*)

Very briefly, he argues that the intellectual life of nations, and the professions which give us social orientation, are responses to the universe seeking its own enhancement through the distribution of tasks and activities which have a grammatical underpinning. Thus deploying the quadrilateral matrix, which he argues in his *The Excessive Power of Spaces* is necessary for correctly observing any social reality, he argues that our experiences will be accumulated and devolved through these spatial/ temporal grammatical modules so that

the subjunctive of grammar, in the life of a great nation, is represented by music, by poetry, by all the arts. The equations of our calculating logic are

spread out in all the sciences and techniques. The trajective, linking us with the living past, lives in us through all the traditions. The prejective is represented by prophecy, ethics, programmatic movements.(1970a, 187)

Accordingly the professions of lawyers, preachers, artists and scientists are grammatical necessities, each profession accentuating an aspect of reality whose grammatical mode is the trajective, prejective, subjective and objective respectively. For Rosenstock-Huessy, a society's survival and development depends very much on its ability adequately cope with its inner and outer spatial and trajective and projective temporal potencies. We need to work with all these potencies and the great danger of philosophy is that it elevates its own importance – and the procedures and grammatical elements which constitute it - at the expense of other potencies which are only disclosed and developed through other grammatical elements and procedures. In this respect, Rosenstock-Huessy sees that when philosophy tries to dominate society it does so at the expense of other powers of society and hence ultimately is pernicious. Its main deficiency lies in its under-appreciation of the fecundity and importance of the poly-form nature of speech.

And, for the most part, he complains, linguistics has followed philosophy, in elevating the mind above speech, even in materialistic philosophies, as if the mind itself is the real thinker and speech simply a rather poor means to get from a to b. ('Fritz Mauthner wrote 6000 pages and proved in one and a half million words that all words lie,' complains Rosenstock-Huessy (1962 Vol.1, 554) .According to Rosenstock-Huessy such approaches to speech all follow what he calls 'the abstract madness of the school grammar', which he says makes the mistake of explaining, what he calls, 'the last grammatical creation: the declarative sentence 'these are' as the beginning of speech.' In fact, he says, a declarative sentence is:

only a conclusion, behind which it has to be started again from the beginning. From the declarative sentence nothing ensues for the future. That's why no knowledge of nature helps us to answer the question how we should live.. The bible with its 'let there be light' and 'there was light' has the experiential demonstrable grammar. Imperative (prejective), conjunctive or optative (subjective), preterite or perfect (trajective), neutral indicative (objective) are grammatical necessities arising out of times and spaces. A higher scientific grammar can exist because from now we can see the modes, the tenses, persons in a completely different way to the Alexandrians. (1968, 32)

For Rosenstock-Huessy, the Alexandrian grammar table, which was originally developed in the 4th century BC as part of larger pedagogical architectonic of the sciences and which is still the standard manner of grammar instruction, has been one of the great hidden obstacles to understanding real or speech thinking. His claim is that the Alexandrian architectonic carries with it a specific orientation to ourselves and reality whose core elements mistakenly become solidified and

privileged and passed on as if reality itself were essentially – always and everywhere - composed of its elements. In particular it privileges the disinterested, impersonal, reflective mode, which breaks up the world into subject and predicate, subject and object. This orientation also brings everything under the rule of the indicative mood of the declarative sentence.

It is this emphasis upon the declarative sentence, which provides the answer to ‘what is?’ that lies behind the repeated accusation he makes against philosophy is that it has instrumentalized speech. As Rosenstock-Huessy says in ‘The Race of Thinkers or the Knackersyard of Faith’ (1962, Vol. 2, 612): ‘The scandalous [and terrific and unheard] claims of the thinkers consist in this: that first they think, and only after that do they mis-advisedly or treacherously disclose what they think to us with the help of speech as their tool.’¹⁰

Of course, philosophy also from its inception appealed to the possibility of philosophy to judge the world and thus the importance to it of the subjunctive or optative mood, so that it oscillated between these two moods, veering more toward the former in its naturalist variants which culminate in modern natural scientific metaphysics of the kind we find in Spinoza or toward the subjunctive/optative in more morally or aesthetically driven metaphysics. As he wrote in his early work *Applied Science (or Know How) of the Soul*:

Things controlled by the indicative are calmly dismissed into the world. The indicative describes and tells about things which are resting, which have been, which are finished or at hand....Being and existence are indeed the epitome of the indicative in all its varieties, because it “allows” something to be said about the world....The philosophy which deifies man is called Idealism since it thrives on freedom of the will. Freedom, however, is the most pithy expression for the subjunctive which expresses everything coming to be. Freedom is the most pithy expression for not wanting to obey yet the laws of existence, for wishing to think of oneself not as part of the world but as divinely inspired, as an Idealist.(1924, 14)

¹⁰ The German is ‘Die unerhörte Behauptung der Denker geht dahin, daß sie erst denken, und dann erst das, was sie denken, mit Hilfe der Sprache als ihres Werkzeuges, uns verraten.’ It is the use of unerhörte and verraten that makes the polemic work so well in German and so hard to ‘get’ in English, because these words express such fundamentally different and even contrary tones/ ideas/ words in English and Rosenstock-Huessy means all the contraries: ‘unerhörte’ can be translated as unbelievable/ unheard/ impermissible/ terrific/ scandalous’ and ‘verraten’ as disclose/ or betray.)

Also:

Philosophy in which the intellect lets everything revolve around the “I” starts with the assumption of eternal freedom. Natural science, emphatically revolving around the “it”, starts with the principles of law. (1924, 42)

In Kant’s distinction between theoretical and practical reason exemplifies how this move from indicative to subjunctive is attempted – as the categorical imperative first requires acknowledging that the will (the base of the subjunctive) is only free when it is not in violation of the laws potentially knowable by theoretical reason (the indicative). Thus when Kant says that he wishes to create a rational faith by defining the limits of experience, just as when he says that ought implies can, from Rosenstock-Huussy’s perspective, he is really showing that the entire metaphysical edifice is derived from a lexical ordering of grammar.

The architecture of the Alexandrian grammar was itself a result of the central role that it had ascribed to philosophy in the sciences so it should come as no surprise about its concurrence with philosophy in grammatical priorities. To a large extent it does this because it has already made some fundamental linguistic commitments which Rosenstock-Huussy thinks have plagued philosophy from its very inception and whose span can be witnessed from Parmenides to Heidegger, and which he also sees as repeatedly dragging philosophy and its followers into phantasmic pursuits.

In the first instance and what he calls its break from ‘aboriginal humanity’ comes from a grammatical preference to deal in pronominals rather than names. (1970b, 77-90)

Rosenstock-Huussy argues that it is not only from the moment of birth one is inducted via names- the names of one’s parents, their family, one’s birthplace, one’s own name, but our life is a continuous accrual of names as each gathers around him or herself a cluster of adjectives that reflect one’s responses to the callings and imperatives of one’s parents, one’s friends, one’s teachers, one’s spouse and children, one’s colleagues, one’s government, one’s society, and, far from being least, one’s enemies. Naming is orientating. As he says in *Ja und Nein*:

In every healthy society, one is inducted and introduced (*vorgestellt*), because life continues as a chain of people and things who have been introduced/ represented (*Vorgestellten*). That’s how one enters history, in so far as one asks after my name and then one acclaims the other...The

human world does not consist of 'will and representation' but as love and introduction/representation. (1968, p. 22)¹¹

Names, then, refer to dynamic processes that move over time. On the other hand pronominals transport us beyond those processes to something more stable; they take us out of the specific relationship and have us think about relationships in a more general manner. As with Schelling's distinction between positive and negative philosophy and the limits of the later, Rosenstock-Huessy is highly suspicious of abstraction and he believes that philosophers have tended to put too much faith in them, believing that they provide the magic key for bringing order into the disorder of the world. The accusation by Socrates that his interlocutors do not have a specific virtue unless they can provide a logically tight definition for 'what (the specific) virtue is,' and the Parmenidian formulation that 'being is' are, for Rosenstock-Huessy, but variants of this mistaken grammatical faith.

For Rosenstock-Huessy, the problem with the kind of case Plato makes in favor of essences and against names in the *Cratylus* (where he provides a satire on the sophists' use of etymology) is that the essence is purchased at the expense of the many processes which names rightly recognize as many. Of course Plato insists that the one and the many must be brought into the union of knowledge's correct definition. But Rosenstock-Huessy argues that names are primarily an historical founding, and hence not a logical matter. Rosenstock-Huessy emphasized this point in his 'Lectures on Greek Philosophy of 1956' when he contrasted Book 2 of the *Iliad* with Plato. That is where Homer recalls the ships and the names of the places and commanders of the different armies of the Greeks. 'Homer's heart,' he says, 'is in following the first impressions also in the physical, in the real life...He's not systematic. He's anti-philosophical...Because a philosopher must have all his material gathered before he can subdivide it ... Therefore it's always a second impression, it's an afterthought.' Whereas the

¹¹ *Vorstellung* is translated here as 'introduction' which follows on from the previous discussion, but in the final line – taken from Schopenhauer's work of that name - Rosenstock-Huessy is playing with the fine line that exists between the terms representation/imagination/ idea and introduction (Schopenhauer's book is translated either as *The World as Will and Representation* or *The World as Will and Idea*.) Indeed the world *Vorstellung* has an important but shifting philosophical pedigree in German idealism: for Kant it is the basis of concepts and intuitions (*Anschauungen*), for Hegel the preliminary form of the concept before it is specified and developed as idea, hence he associates it with feelings and its proper sphere of expression is art. But Rosenstock-Huessy goes back to the much more basic everyday use of the term in *sich vorstellen* meaning 'to introduce oneself,' which also has resonances of presentation – as in 'I would like to present myself,' 'to show you myself,' 'to be in your circle.' One might add this initial act of presentation is the condition of re-presentation, of the *Stellung* - the condition/ position/ emplacement - that is set before us.

philosopher is suspicious of the same name that may be concealing different essences, Homer is not interested if two people have the same name in trying to establish a common essence, but in this naming of the ships 'poetry has to keep the individual names of every one city here.' (1956b, Vol. 6, Oct 18)

Unlike a pronoun, a specific name locates, sums up, emphasizes an event that has been or will become; it is done to orientate (even if, as in a lie, to veil). As Rosenstock-Huessy says

The political power of names makes people circulate. Names signify our division of labor. They make room for a man and a thing. The "throne," the "hustings," our "tongue" as Greeks, the "eye of justice," the "thunder of Zeus," those were all names whose invocation made people move out or in....

Names make no sense unless they stand in mutual relation. Mother is not mother unless she may call, under the law, somebody the father. Brother is brother to a sister. And unless he calls her sister and she calls him brother, the name is worthless. The general and the sergeant, the master and the apprentice, the army and the navy make room for each other, in the wonderful whole of names. All names belong to this *holon*, to society. No name is good without the others. The Pan of the universe drives people panicky, that is they lose speech. The *holon* of the city gives everybody a name in such a manner that everybody else now can be named by him, too. (1970b, 83-84)

On the other hand, a pro-noun is a way of not being precise about location, emergence, faith, hope, or love etc.

Pronouns are a compromise between the real name of a person or a thing and the pointing finger while such person or thing is within the reach of our sense perception. To call a spade a spade is one thing; to point to the spade while it lies before us, which simply requires the gesture and a "there!," is a totally different act. One is the act of naming, the other is an attempt to reduce naming to its informal minimum. (1970b, 82)

For Rosenstock-Huessy the problem of names is also a key component in the dispute between Heraclitus' flux and Parmenides' sphere of being. Like Nietzsche, he saw the two philosophies represent the choice between one path generally not taken by philosophers (Heraclitus') which would enable us to enter more deeply into the tensions and struggles of life, and another (the road more traveled of Parmenides) which stabilizes and logicizes and hence simplifies the abstract world, thus making it of very limited real worth for orientating us in life. In what he calls a 'conjunction', a letter he composes from Heraclitus to Parmenides, he has Heraclitus say to Parmenides: "Being" is the scalp of the divine acts and the political names. This scalp hangs dangling on your belt, To hell with your "pronoun," to hell with your "pro-verb" "being." Or we shall all find ourselves in hell.' (1970b, 90)

In *Ja und Nein* he make the point that what is done with nouns is also done with verbs, most notably in the case of philosophy with the verb *sein* (to be)/ noun *Das Sein* which is then rendered as being, which he sees as simply the dead husk or the smoke of what once had life.

Children say 'you,' 'I,' 'there,' 'here' ..Philosophers though love one pronoun above all others: the little word being.' Being involves the loss of seeing and hearing (Sein. Da vergehen ihm Hören und Sehen). He wants to ground being. 'Being' ('Das Sein') along with the forms am, are, is, is a pro-verb in exactly the same way as 'this' is a pronoun. The famous copula 'is' stands for all verbs as a stenophon, an abbreviation One can only be talk of being, who experiences all verbs and cites them as 'being.' Because pronouns are senseless without the words for which they stand. Most philosophies of being speak of 'being,' without having drunk from and been sated by the fullness of all verbs; that's why they are noise and smoke, and that's why the existentialists explained the war to them. There is only the essence of God after you have experienced that God rages, creates, blesses and shakes up. (1968, 38-39)

The great choice for post-Nietzschean thinking, for Rosenstock-Huessy, is not so much as Heidegger believed a choice between continuing to remain entrapped in our compliance with beings rather than Being, but between continuing to take our orientation from pronominals rather than be more attentive to names. In this respect Heidegger is Greek – i.e. still philosophical -, whereas Rosenstock-Huessy is (to use a much loved word of Heidegger) genuinely 'primordial' or pre-philosophical because he thinks the pre-philosophical was wiser in its fidelity to language. Moreover, from Rosenstock-Huessy's perspective what Heidegger has in common with the essentialist thinking he is so critical of is that he still fools himself into thinking that he is not part of the great events of historical experiences that are encapsulated in names, that with thought he can move beyond them – but the thought itself, for Heidegger, when it is not merely pronominal pro-verbial thought is so saturated in history it cannot be overleaped except by a social rupture and new social foundational act and name.¹² From Rosenstock-Huessy's perspective, Heidegger's deployment of Being as a gesture of defiance against the technicity into which the world has fallen is precisely the same kind of optatively governed gesture which characterizes the philosopher's freedom (an aesthetic/ moral one). Heidegger's reference, in his *Der Spiegel* Interview of 1966, to him awaiting a new god, who must remain nameless, on an earth from which the gods have fled is, from Rosenstock-Huessy's perspective, indicative of just how barren is his landscape of possibilities. For all his talk, then, of being beyond metaphysics, from Rosenstock-Huessy's perspective, Heidegger is so afraid of repeating its gestures and moves he is imprisoned by it. He is still

¹² Ereignis – event- is of course a core category in Heidegger, but to the extent that it is not bound up with specific named events means that it functions in a purely abstract way.

primarily a philosopher, and far less a *Mensch*, as the new thinkers like Rosenstock-Huessy sought to be, exercising ‘common sense’ and working with the common stock of names.

By appealing to the primacy of names, Rosenstock-Huessy is not saying that one must always accept one’s tradition. Traditions have to constantly be reinvented or reconfigured – but he does dispute that the basis of that transformation is primarily a philosophical act, as if the disinterested philosopher could digest and judge everything with his or her own mind. Names are constantly being renegotiated and ‘*to think means to introduce better names.*’ (1970 a, 174) But for the most part this process occurs through the trial and catastrophes of events and a social consensus about the meaning of the event. Tracing the naming of what is now known as the holocaust is one example of how naming is often a matter of trial and error before there is a consensus about which name is appropriate for the experience that has traumatized a group and which that social group wishes to embed in its collective/institutional memory and pass onto future generations. (1970a, 174)

The downgrading of the importance of the name in philosophy, for Rosenstock-Huessy, has as its counterpart the downgrading of the vocative case and hence the dialogical component of truth. In *Ja und Nein* he contrasts the difference between the vocative which is part of the practice of dialogue and truth formation and beginning with the abstract nominative, the ‘thing’ to be adjudged philosophically. ‘Vocatives create the preconditions for reciprocal communication; whereas nominatives and other cases take their place inside of communication. The vocative provokes the conversation.’ (1968, 25) And:

The vocative means: turn around and face me; we want to talk with each other for a while. Such a summons, invitation, challenge, introduction sets men in motion. The other cases enable all the named to have their place. The vocative, however, turns them around!’...The nominative only points to different things, how they stand or lay ...but the vocative belongs in the conjugation. The caller and the called belong in the conjugation. (1968, 26)

Contrast this, for a moment, with the Socratic and more modern Cartesian traditions. In both the concrete self dissolves either into the object to be studied or into the cognitive or methodological rules of the transcendental subject. In both instances the truth is the objective fact or state of affairs. But for Rosenstock-Huessy what is being left out of this picture is the participative role we all have in world-making and that role brings with it a knowledge and sense of our own purposefulness. What is so important for Rosenstock-Huessy is that in the moment of creative address because the social world is generated by decisive acts of inspiration and our history is a tapestry of those acts – they are not predictable or rather they need not be predictable – the more predictable they are and become,

the more it shows us that the particular group who have acted so predictably have been reduced to being a dead automaton.

This lack of emphasis upon the vocative is closely related to Rosenstock-Huessy's attempt to redress what he sees as the over accentuation of the modern faith in analysis, which is part of its philosophical legacy and also part of philosophy's aspiration to rule. According to Rosenstock-Huessy, the real sequence of orientation is: Obey, communicate, explain, systematize.

In the first instance one hears a name called out above one, then one communicates with another, who participates in the same named group as him. In the third we report, everything that has been done and has happened under this name; we report, we explain and we establish what is happening. Finally we oversee everything and compare and draw the sum of everything into a logical system. We analyze. (1968, 32)

Analysis, then, is the conclusion of a process and at no stage does Rosenstock-Huessy claim that analysis or philosophy are completely unhelpful – but their benefits require that they are part of a linguistic whole and that whole is what forms the social organism within which philosophy may play its role. According to Rosenstock-Huessy, philosophy tends to mistake the part for the whole and the small measure of reason we have for being powerful enough to be the measure of all. Whereas the process briefly described above is what forms the collective 'we' and this formation of the 'we' is at the basis of all common endeavors and it is as much the case for philosophers or natural scientists –for the group of 'analysts' – as for any group. While science tends to concentrate on the array of its results and the application of methods and experiments etc. which achieve them, no less real are the human and institutional processes that are involved – the audacity of Galileo, the sweat and sacrifice of a science student to learn difficult material, the solidarity in pursuit of the truth about nature's workings are all indispensable to science and enable scientists to share a common pursuit and what Rosenstock-Huessy calls a particular 'present' in a 'time body.' As he writes in his *Soziologie*:

Only because all physicists describe one Physics, because "Physics" has existed from 1600 to 1950 only thanks to this omnipresence of Physics for 350 years is the chain of experiments and mistakes meaningful. Physics can make gigantic mistakes and false teachings, a thousand times more than a single mortal, because it has a great present, on which the most distant future and the oldest past work. (1956, 290.)

In contrast, then, to real speech which is developed over time, Rosenstock-Huessy sees that 'philosophy talks to man as though the experiment of living had not yet taken place before the experiment, so to speak. "Reason" always argues before the event, before our soul, has been incarnated, before God has come into the world.' (1941, 6) Philosophy is able to occupy a zone in which our problems and its

solution are 'eternalized – it stops time and that shows in its solutions. In sum it is a-historical, while our challenges and crises are in history and in time.

Although other philosophers, in particular Heidegger, Schelling and Bergson make time important, Rosenstock-Huessy was also not at all convinced that they had done it sufficiently. In the case of Schelling and Bergson it was because they remained imprisoned by the mechanistic conception of sequential time in which past, present and future move in the one direction. Thus in the opening chapter of Volume 2 of the *Soziologie* he takes issue with Schelling's declaration in the *Ages of the World* that 'the past is known, the future cognized, the future intimated' (1958, 16-19)– for while Schelling is a major critic of mechanistic philosophy and his call for a narrative philosophy is explicitly acknowledged by Franz Rosenzweig as being one of the most important precursors of the new thinking, the notion of time expressed here is decisively sequential and not at all at odds with the mechanistic conception of time which has evolved out of philosophy.¹³ While such a representation of space/ time as one finds in the new sciences of the philosophies of Descartes, Newton and Kant (for all their inner variants) certainly enables the sharpening of our understanding and observation of causal or material process, socially and personally we experience time as the push of the past and future. Our present is not simply a passing point on a one way flow, but the intersection of past and future in our present – future coming back to us as much as past coming toward us, which, he believed, is how we experience the historical catastrophes which come from the conflict between suffocating spaces and the freedom to found a new time. Heidegger's emphasis upon thrown-ness and projection make him much closer to Rosenstock-Huessy, but his substitution of historicity for real history and hence real times, evident in the above discussion on names, remains a dividing line between them.

For Rosenstock-Huessy because purposefulness (trajectiveness and prejectiveness) is integral to being, time is nuanced– as it is grammatically – and pluralised as it is institutionally – institutions are the way in which a particular coalition of temporal forces coalesce and reproduce themselves. 'Without a multiplicity of times,' he says 'I remain speechless.' (1968, 12)

Moreover, for Rosenstock-Huessy, time and passion and history form an important connection which all come together in speech. Above all time is experienced as history – and this is as much so individually as collectively; just as history is not simply a sequential flow of forces which have their naturalistic counterparts. Rather different events stamp themselves in the hearts and minds of a people and continue to impact upon a group long after their existence, thereby, at different times and to different degrees, activating passions of subsequent

¹³ For his critique of Bergson 1963, 529-530. For Rosenstock-Huessy, the mechanistic deployment of time is simply the reproduction of philosophy's hidden presumption of the superiority of space. Again the point is visible in Kant who makes time the condition of the transcendental imagination and hence of the categories, but time can only be verified by being represented as an imagined line, i.e. by the invocation of the inner intuition of the form of space.

generations. And much of Rosenstock-Huessy's work is devoted the great 'events', the great catastrophes, and time bodies ensuing from them which have given us our particular historical character. More generally, this activation of the passions by past events, for Rosenstock-Huessy, and the replacement of one pantheon of names for another as a hateful future is replaced by the promise of one more venerable is a fundamental aspect of world-making and it is ultimately why for him names are so important. Names are testimonies to events and just as our speech is a means to activate us, names are the fundamental triggers of the passions and hence of our world making; they are the testimonies of what we love, what call us to act or what have become so hateful that new directions must be opened up and new names given to them. History is a great pantheon of names which are the register of passions and total commitments past – when those names no longer em-passion that component of a group's history is dead.

History, though, is not simply a plurality of names – Rosenstock-Huessy argued that it also tends toward a common story, as speakers and listeners are forced by successive catastrophes to become increasingly integrated into common spaces and times and to see the connection between the times and hence between each other. Such a connection can only be a real connection if it takes account of the bloody conflicts and the different responses and causes behind war and revolution as much as the moments and successes of common cause. That is, it must be multi-vocular, but being multi-vocular is not the same as being an archipelago of hermetically sealed cries; history provides the difference between Babel (the interminable inability to communicate one's suffering and one's love, faith and hopes) and a possible common future. 'All history is the tale of acts in which some speaker and some listener have become one.' (1970a,109) It is the formation of 'We.' Thus, he says, in *Ja und Nein*, 'we discover the founding act of life as the shaking up or shock (*Erschütterung*) of a man so that he is he is activated, finally activated and called upon to join in the formation of history in his own name.'(1968, 26)

What ultimately concerns Rosenstock-Huessy is incarnation and he believes that philosophy not only has not been sufficiently attentive to the process of incarnation and its historical importance, but that religions, especially Christianity have been far more successful in their fruits than philosophy – a claim he attempts to back up in his historical writings on the Church and Christendom. Modernity was in many ways an attempt by philosophy to replace Christianity in Europe as an incarnatory force with its sciences and morals and art, in sum its humanism. But he believed – and this is the seminal event overhanging all his thought – the devastation of the World Wars had disproved its claim, and that humanism had discovered, but not sufficiently digested, the truth of incarnation – that it is based upon service to somebody. The nations became the gods of the moderns, not them-selves, not nature and their sciences which were quickly placed in service to the nations and then their ideologies with their subsequent heads – Stalin and Hitler and the like.

4. A Christianity of Non-transcendence

Given that Rosenstock-Huessy always insisted that he was a Christian thinker, that if known at all by people in the English speaking world it is as Rosenzweig's 'Christian' dialogical partner and friend who tried, but failed, to convert Rosenzweig to his faith, it is necessary to spend a little time spelling out exactly what he meant by Christianity. The need to do this is also underscored by the fact that Rosenstock-Huessy was a thinker who wished to explicate what it means to be a Christian in a post-Christian age, i.e. in an age where most people not only no longer know what it means to be Christian, but don't know that they don't know, and yet, nevertheless are far more Christian than they realize.

Rosenstock-Huessy's Christianity, has to be seen in light of his treating all past human formations, whether of the tribe, the empire, the polis, etc. as vital compounds formed by the vocabularies, with all the expectations and summonings of the people constituting them, which expressed the underlying realities which made them possible. Thus talk of Jesus' divinity which everybody understood in Europe in the Middle Ages was connected with the world which surrounded them – classes, political powers, oaths, buildings, paintings, music etc. is no more nor less real than Zeus or Athena were for the world of the Greeks or Horace, Osiris and the ka were for the Egyptians. And with Rosenstock-Huessy, whether he was talking about the graves and the totems, or Horus and Osiris and the bestowing of the ka upon the Pharaoh, or Homer and the Greek pantheon, or the Jewish decision to abandon the ways of empire, he was primarily undertaking an archaeological act of linguistic and sociological excavation to show his readers what trials each people were responding to and how they had all found new forms of life which still resonate through our lives, if we are but attentive enough to notice.

For Rosenstock-Huessy, what was unique about the Christian faith was that it was a way of world making dedicated to bringing all of human kind into one family based upon fundamental truths about suffering, love, death, creation, redemption and incarnation. For him, the Church was big enough to embrace those with 'otherworldly' childish understandings and those who understood that Christianity was a commitment to making the world on the basis of sacrificial love. Whether rightly or wrongly he was generally puzzled and astonished at what he thought were the inane and childish reductions that constituted the humanist and rationalist understanding not only of Christian life, but of all pre-humanist pagan life forms.¹⁴ Indeed, he generally acquainted this attitude with a non-historical

¹⁴ That Rosenstock-Huessy's understanding of Christianity would find itself challenged is hardly surprising. Thus, for example, Karl Löwith in his 1946 review of *The Christian Future for Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (1946, pp. 248-249) says that Rosenstock's ideas are essentially closer to paganism (especially Goethe) and that he secularizes and vaporizes Christianity.

understanding of humanity – one which he saw as widespread even in the discipline of history – which so often simply transposed contemporary orientations (names) back into the past and thus missed so much of the experience of humanity because it insisted upon ascribing its own modern ‘denuded’ (humanist) view of ‘man’ to worlds which knew nothing of ‘man’ as such.

One consequence, for him, of the triumph of humanism and rationalism, he believed, was that most moderns have simply forgotten what gods were. And he returns repeatedly to the term ‘god’ to bring out its sense as a power we serve which makes us speak, and guide our actions. In one particularly pithy formulation, which neatly captures the thrust of the new thinking’s insistence upon God and Man as two irreducible subjects of historical predications, he says that ‘God and Man is a reciprocal letter exchange’ (1968, 23.) Restated in thoroughly secular terms and from our side – the forces we surrender to in our lives make us what we are; we become what we serve; what we sacrifice ourselves to makes us.

The failure to understand what a god is, for Rosenstock-Huessy, is on a par with our widespread failure to see beyond our own horizon and understand the truths behind the animism of tribal peoples or the insights into the moving heavens by early imperial peoples. Thus it was, he believed, that today so many, including so-called Christians, failed to fathom the claims about Jesus’ divinity, which had to do with the overpowering of death, not in any mystical or Pythagorean manner of the continuity of the individual soul in a netherworld, but in the triumph over death and deadly forces through forming a body across time, the church. For Rosenstock-Huessy, Jesus was proof that Caesar and Pharaoh and ‘great men’ were not gods and Jesus’ divinization meant that after him no one else would be God, that our redemption was universal and mutual. Jesus’ taking on the role of the crucified was to show us that we crucify God when we do evil to each other, and that we fail to achieve the maximum of our powers (our own divinity) in our failure to obey the law of love, and that to obey the commandment of love means being continually prepared to leave abodes ruled by death and die into new forms of love and fellowship.

For Rosenstock-Huessy, the basic terms of Christianity emerged out of pagan and Jewish historical experience, and this fusion was a source of great historical truth

For his part, Rosenstock-Huessy sees the kind of criticism being made by Löwith as due to a complete inability to understand the connection between the Christian, the pagan and the Jew and the widespread tendency, repeated by Löwith, to project Greek philosophical abstractions – soul, immortality, timelessness, the good etc. – onto Christianity. Rosenstock-Huessy, who was very critical in private correspondence to Georg Müller of Löwith, simply could not understand how Löwith could not see the connection between the murdering machines of modernity and modern philosophy.

about how reality is formed out of suffering and love. Hence a huge part of Rosenstock-Huessy's corpus is devoted to showing the reality and power – the truth - of tribal and pre-modern imperial life (particularly Egypt) as well as the Greek city states and the Jewish people.¹⁵

Rosenstock-Huessy also argued that Christianity emerged as a response to many of the same forces which created these other forms of life, only at a different historical time, a time where their degeneracy and deficiency had forced a new stratagem of social survival. The uniqueness of this new stratagem, for him, is that due to its peculiar fusion of suffering, sacrificial love, death, and *universal* redemption it was able to reinvigorate and reconstitute forms once spent, thus enabling the possibility of tribal peoples to harmonize with empires, and poets and philosophers to join with prophets in an attempt to realize the New Jerusalem. (Rosenstock-Huessy refers to this song of Blake's a number of times).

This was what he meant by Christianity's founding the full count of the times due to its resuscitating 'bodies' from other times (see especially 1938 and 1987). Like Rosenzweig who also interpreted this combination of universalisation and redemption as the unending task of Christianity, Rosenstock-Huessy interpreted Christianity through the same broad triadic rhythm as Schelling – Petrine, Pauline and Johannine, where there is the movement from the Church visible established by Rome, the church invisible of the Reformation to the Church fully devolved, yet alive, in modern society.

In Rosenstock-Huessy's account the first millennium of the Church had created a widespread consciousness of love of the neighbour, having taken a faith of the Jews into the pagan world, and by the ninth century it had created what he calls 'the world's first universal democracy,' All Soul's Day, where the soul of the poorest peasant or widow was as much loved by God as the pope or emperor and all lived in the knowledge of the judgment to come. By contrast, the second millennium had been a connected series of 'total revolutions.' These revolutions involved the fierce actuality of last judgments, as people who lived with the promise of the second coming in their hearts had reached such a state of hatred, desperation and lack, a hatred of love's and heaven's absence in the society surrounding them, they had fought to bring heaven into the world. Each revolution while total in aspiration had only been partial in success, but the conditions of modern social and political freedom were, he attempts to show in

¹⁵ It is interesting to compare this strategy with Franz Rosenzweig whose *The Star of Redemption* has so often been criticized for its decision to show precisely where Judaism differs from every other way of world making (including Christianity which he saw as a 'divine' ally who would always also be an enemy). In effect, though, Rosenstock-Huessy conceived of his 'Cross of Reality' being the necessary complement of Rosenzweig's 'Star' and that his task, as a Christian, was to discover what was redeemable and hence capable of being shared universally in every life-way.

his two main works on revolution, the byproducts of local revolts with total ambitions circulating in a world that was being fused by a common history and destiny. The World Wars were, he argued, the continuation of this revolutionary process. In sum, when Christ had said he had come to bring a sword, even though he was not urging the deployment of worldly means, the teaching of love that he had sort to place in the hearts of men and women had lead to a series of convulsions and cataclysms that were forcing us to obey the law of love or perish. These revolutions which stretched from the Investiture Conflict or what he calls the Papal revolution to the First World War and the Russian Revolution had given the modern world its shape – and, he believed, its solution, the fulfillment of the messianic promise to Abraham and the real rationale for the church's very existence, which had become the real future building mission of the (originally European now planetary bodies) politics of the last millennium.

That solution was what he called a metanomical society, a planetary society in which discordances could be peacefully accommodated in creative tension. In fact, while Rosenstock-Huessy remains completely passed over by what can loosely be called post-modernism (although he had used the term as early as 1949, in his paper 'Liturgical Thinking,' as a way of describing contemporary life), he shares two major concerns with postmodernists: (a) the recognition that the global economy has reactivated the local and that any genuinely desirable revolutionary outcome must be receptive to local customs which enrich people, and (b) that we will only be able to create a life worth living at a planetary level if differences are not dissolved but able to retain their vitality.

According to Rosenstock Huessy the lesson of history and the accumulated memory (history) of human suffering gathered through our speech-formed, time-building capacity was that we all must live as Jew, Christian and Pagan. In his *Christian Future* and the second volume of the *Sociology* he would elaborate on this by arguing that in our times we needed to fuse Christ, Abraham, Buddha and Lao Tse. His decision to make Buddhism and Taoism essential components of the contemporary cross of reality was part of his attempt to help found a metanomical framework which would enable the concordance of disparities. But it is fair to say that neither Buddhism nor Taoism, nor Islam (which he writes a section on in volume two of the *Sociology*), nor Hinduism occupied his attention anywhere near as much as the spirits of the tribes, Egypt, Greece, the Israelites and Christian peoples.

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